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## AN AFTERWORD ON THE POLITICS OF ESCAPE

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Afterword of the german edition of *Dark Deleuze*

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History, for the most part, has been made by the nameless and the faceless. It has been made by slaves, workers, housewives, sex workers, day and migrant laborers, and everyone else who, through no fault of their own, found themselves blackmailed into selling whatever remained of their 'humanity' in order to secure a place in a society that is nothing more than a thinly veiled and dressed up state of nature. That is to say, history was made and continues to be made by those, whose lives will never be immortalized in works of art, whose stories will never be found in any literary canon or read in any academic journal, and whose actions are never to be remembered in monuments or statues bearing their name. So, if we find ourselves forced to intervene in the age-old debate regarding the 'subject of history' or 'revolutionary subjectivity,' then we are compelled to assert that, before all else, the revolutionary subject that is said to bring the long awaited abolition of capital has always been a nameless and faceless agent. In other words, this most sought after subject exists in such a way that we are forced to acknowledge at least three defining characteristics: anonymity, opacity, and indiscernibility from either a mass or a crowd.

And, in a certain sense, one can say that Culp's text you hold in your hands is particularly concerned about the fate of these nameless and faceless agents who engage in that thankless endeavor of making and remaking History. *Dark Deleuze* is a text that positions itself against popular interpretations of Deleuze as a pure philosopher, liberal-democrat, ontological realist, or theorist of how networks of rhizomes hold the key for the liberation of humanity. In its place, Culp draws an image of Deleuze as one who remained committed to a project of an anti-state revolutionary communism. More than simple academic exercise, this interpretation of Deleuze is placed in the service of connecting the problems that have plagued leftist movements to a notion of revolutionary subjectivity that persists without name or face. Perhaps we could read this as a wager placed on finishing the work that was begun by the first of those faceless and nameless agents of revolution, but this is not to say that the only way to enact historical changes is by perishing into a forgotten nothingness. Rather, it is to say that given the present configuration of

Capital, a 'darkened' Deleuze proves useful for developing a framework of offensive strategies and defensive tactics whereby we would be able to live as a reality the truth we were promised by Marx himself when he nominated communism as the real movement that abolishes the present state of things.

So what is 'dark' about *Dark Deleuze*, then? Primarily the fact that Culp's 'dark' Deleuze is closer, politically speaking, to a participant in a black bloc than any those who, in the wake of the EU referendum and recent US elections, double-down and proclaim the virtues of the transparent and public nature of democratic procedures. Culp's 'dark' interpretation draws the portrait of a Deleuze who takes pleasure when criticized for simply being one more victim of that 'infantile disorder' on the Left; a Deleuze who never compromised in his commitment to a true revolutionary transformation of society understood as the 'real movement' that abolishes the present state of things and is a project will not be accomplished by engaging in open debate or rational dialogue. This is the image of a Deleuze who views the world through eyes sobered by the daily violence we are made to undergo; a Deleuze whose political animus arises from these everyday encounters and whose conviction led him to assert that, in the end, "We do not feel ourselves outside of our time but continue to undergo shameful compromises with it." So, while Culp has provided us with a sufficient criticism of the dominant trends within the academic reception of Deleuze's work, it will be worth emphasizing how *Dark Deleuze* isn't simply the latest in academic trends but is a work whose novelty in terms of contemporary scholarship merits our acknowledgment of it as a true work of *heresy*. And once we have come to understand the heretical nature of Culp's interpretation of Deleuze, then we will see how we may begin to live in reality the truth implicit in *Dark Deleuze*'s politics of escape.

### 1. The Heresy

At the outset one thing is clear: as far as studies of Deleuze are concerned, *Dark Deleuze* is quite literally a work of heresy. Despite the texts unrelenting argument for Deleuze as a thinker of negativity, and with a preference from difference-as-exclusion and asymmetric as opposed to inclusive and substantially identical to itself, one would be mistaken in thinking this as a Hegelian critique dressed up in Deleuzian wool. Despite the fact that this 'darkened' Deleuze appears to closely resemble Hegel's privileged terms of contradiction, opposition, and negation, *Dark Deleuze* attempts a principled reconstruction of a thoroughly political Deleuze on altogether different set of concepts: world destruction, asymmetry, un-becoming, diagrammatics, powers of falsity, and ultimately opacity and indiscernibility.

The texts heretical reconstruction begins, for Culp, with the divergence between two main approaches and interpretations: on the one hand are those who promote an image of Deleuze as the latest thinker in the long tradition of liberalism or of ontological realism and a fully automated luxury communism, or of a blind acceptance of Capital as the true agent of human history. On the other hand, there are those who take Deleuze at his word when he assigns himself the task of 'overthrowing ontology' and the development of the powers of the false. This latter position would also include those who read Deleuze as a thinker who unabashedly privileges the deterritorializing powers of the war machine against the capitalist State, as a thinker who is both politically principled and who assumes an uncompromising asymmetry to the world in his valorisation of a becoming-revolutionary that takes as one of its principal political projects the task of destroying those aspects of the world that seek to destroy us. It is clearly within this latter tradition that *Dark Deleuze* stakes its claim and chastises the former approach for determining, *a priori*, that any revolutionary aspiration must be admitted to be impossibility. It is against this background that Culp offers his principal assessment of this Deleuzian orthodoxy: it has been the to our detriment – and the detriment of actually understanding Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary aspirations – that we continue to rely on the affirmationist, connectionist, and joyous concepts of rhizomes, assemblages, and networks. As Culp writes

Philosophically, connectivity is about world building. The goal of connectivity is to make everyone and everything part of a single world. Yet connectivity today is determined far more by people like Google Ideas director Jared Cohen, who demonstrates the significance of Deleuze's argument that "technology is social before it is technical" (F, 17). Trained as a counterterrorism expert, Google poached Cohen from a position at the Department of State, where he convinced Condoleezza Rice to integrate social media into the Bush administration's "diplomatic tool kit" (Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 305). In a geopolitical manifesto cowritten with then Google CEO Eric Schmidt, *The New Digital Age*, Cohen reveals Google's deep aspiration to extend U.S. government interests at home and abroad. Their central tool? Connectivity. When connectivity is taken as a mantra, you can see its effects everywhere [...] As perverse as it sounds, many Deleuzians still promote concepts that equally motivate these slogans: transversal lines, assemblages, connections, compositionist networks, complex assemblages, affective experiences, and enchanted objects. No wonder Deleuze has been derided as the lava lamp saint of "California Buddhism" – so many have reduced his rigorous philosophy to the mutual appreciation of difference, openness to encounters in an entangled world, or increased capacity through synergy. Instead of drawing out the romance, *Dark Deleuze* demands that we kill our idols. (Culp 2016: 6-7)

It is because the connectivist image of Deleuze has been outstripped by the marriage between Google's cybernetic technology and the aims of the capitalist-State that Culp argues for an altogether different and definitely unfamiliar task for thinking and living today: World Destruction. This destructive image of Deleuze substitutes 'philosophy as concept creation' for the apocalyptic aspiration that Deleuze himself discovered in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, where readers encounter a world that was never theirs from the start and who enter into the threat of apocalypse. According to Culp, then, what we need to understand from Deleuze's

remarks on *Erewhon* is that Deleuze privileges the category of 'apocalypse', and thus world-destruction, over and against any notion of world as a unified, commensurable, and compossible whole and its subsequent project of world-construction. Instead of presenting Deleuze as a thinker who remains committed to the relationship between the *transcendent* Ideas of World, Soul, and God, Culp argues in favor of a Deleuze who gave thinking the task of comprehending the *immanent* Idea of the World. On this view, the reality of the world is not to be located in any regulative Idea of pure or practical Reason but in the presently existing relations of power that define any historical moment.

How far we are from the Deleuze most people are familiar with – that world of rhizomes, empowering affects, and joyous connections that build a revolutionary plane of consistency! However, Culp's text isn't written in the same manner as Deleuze's early monographs; which is to say, this is not a text that silently corrects the errors of the philosopher in question and then passes off those corrections as having been, always already, present in the original work itself. Instead, Culp's approach is that of highlighting the moments where Deleuze clearly repeats his commitment to a project that seeks to dispel any belief in the efficacy of 'constructing the plane of immanence' or the 'body without organs' where this construction ultimately resembles the immanence and connectivity that are definitive of global surveillance networks. Thus it is pointless to continue distinguishing between what some have called Empire from what others have called World precisely because they have now become one and the same.

### 1. World Destruction

While the concept of the 'Death of this World' one encounters in Culp's text is bound to the long history of criticism Deleuze undertook in his engagements with Enlightenment rationality, and particularly Kant's critical project. Perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from Deleuze's critique of the image of philosophy inaugurated by an Enlightenment thinker such as Kant is the following: the World can never be known and so can only be theorized; that is, we never have concrete knowledge to World in its totality and only grasp the World insofar as we treat it as a regulative Idea that is supposed to orient us in philosophical and scientific endeavors. In stricter terms, and according to Kant, the antinomy posed to our reasoning with respect to the equal possibility of a finite and an infinite world is intended to show how *inferences* made by pure reason alone are based upon poorly posed problems ('is the world finite or infinite?') and give rise to metaphysical illusion. However, while we are barred from making a determinate judgment of the World as the synthetic totality of all its appearances, Kant argues that this demonstrates that the true role of Ideas is not informative but *regulative*. The Ideas of Soul, World, and God regulate our activity of rational inquiry by serving as the signposts that guide natural science and the organizing horizon of this knowledge. But what does this have to do with Culp's critique of the connectivist and productivist tendencies in Deleuze scholarship?

Culp's wager is the following: if the Idea of the World was initially regulative and served to guide rational inquiry and the natural sciences toward an ever more unified system of knowledge; this idea has now been exhausted in our contemporary moment. Not because we have synthesized, once and for all, the totality of all appearances in science. Rather, it is because a unitary synthesis of all that appears is definitive of, and being constantly perfected by, the logical progression of the (re-)production of capitalist social relations. It is capitalism that has proved adequate to the task assigned by this regulative Idea of World. It is against the backdrop of this present marriage of the (Idea of the) World to the machinations of capital that the need for a *darker* Deleuze can be felt. As Culp writes

Contemporary Deleuze scholarship tends to be connectivist and productivist. Connectivism is the world-building integration into an expanding web of things...Academics are not alone in endorsing connectivism—I argue that connectivism drives Google's geopolitical strategy of global influence, which proceeds through a techno-affirmationist desire to annex everything. Commentators use different names for their webs of connection, such as rhizomes, assemblages, networks, material systems, or *dispositifs*. I simply call them "this world" and plot for its destruction. (Culp 2016: 66-7)

Connectivist's and productivist's, therefore, contribute to a world-building politics, where world-building implies a totally networked global society that would also increase individual worker productivity and decrease the amount of time and number of activities that remain semi-autonomous from the demand for productive labor. Thus, from the writings of Kant up to Google's techno-wet-dream of a fully networked reality, it was always (the Idea of) the World that was at issue. It was always a question of the World as both the guidepost and goal for a unified system of everything that appears. However, we should not mistake the privilege given to world destruction as some implicit eschatology in Culp's reading of Deleuze. Rather, what is certain is that the World as Idea appears to have exhausted itself on the factory floors, the start-up boardrooms, the gentrified neighborhoods, and call center booths of capital.

Given this fact that the World is approaching the end of its usefulness for thought, we need to understand the 'Death of the World' as a choice made on how we want this world to end: 'This is not the banal disaster movie, whose ambitions are usually limited to teaching us what are the bare essentials to survive. *Writing the disaster is how we break free* from the stifling perpetual present, for the present carries with itself a suffocating urgency' (Culp 2016: 24). In this manner, the destructive character of *Dark Deleuze* isn't simply another *indeterminate negation* of a social totality or a blanket rejection of everything and anything that presently exists; Culp's darkened image of Deleuze isn't a thinker who is anti-everything-and-everything for its own sake. On the

contrary, this is an image of Deleuze that privileges the destructive aspects of lines of flight and seeks to devise a practical political strategy based on the fact that the (Idea of the) World and 'world building' as it currently stands can no longer serve its original, regulative, and ideal purpose.

In order to address any of the remaining doubts one may have regarding this identity between world and capital, an exercise in our Marxist catechism should suffice to corroborate Culp's view. Beginning with those opening pages of *Capital* vol. I and up through, at the very least, the situationists, the world has always been nothing but an 'immense accumulation of commodities' that we are confronted with on a daily basis. By consequence, then, what determines our relationship to this world and those in it is the commodity-form. Therefore, a world whose total appearance can be gleaned from the commodities in storefront windows and high street shops, where what appears to us in our daily lives seem to always be things and never persons, can not be said to be anything but the world as capital. While it may be the case that it is capital that causes the 'death of the world', Culp maintains that it is only those faceless and the nameless subjects who can bring about 'world destruction' – a project that is to be taken up and whose outcome is never guaranteed from the start.

However, it is important to note that the task of world destruction elaborated here is significant only to the extent that it is tied to another key pillar of Culp's interpretation: the notion of Deleuze as a Marxist who is 'so anti-State that it refuses the project of democracy' (Culp 2016: 42). Despite some reader's knee-jerk reactions to this image of Deleuze, Culp develops this reading from the passages wherein Deleuze and Guattari themselves denounce the various forms democracy has taken. From *A Thousand Plateaus* alone we see the appearance of military democracies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 394), social democracies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 462), and even totalitarian-social democracies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 462). From *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari analyze various instances of Democracy that span from the colonial democracy of Antiquity up to a Nazi democracy (Deleuze and Guattari 1992: 97; 108).

*Dark Deleuze* belongs to the tradition of those who position themselves as agents of the extra-parliamentary Left. Though *Dark Deleuze* was written before France's all out refusal of the proposed Labor Law, its vision of a politics worthy of the name finds confirmation in one particular slogan that was in the midst of riots and tear gas: *an other end to the world is possible*. To strive toward bringing about an alternative end of the world other than the one seemingly guaranteed by capital, this would be the political content of *Dark Deleuze*'s call for 'world destruction.'

### III. The Agents of World Destruction

However, one may wonder, who is the subject that Culp nominates for carrying out this apocalyptic program? Who is it that gets to determine the 'future earth' and 'people to come'? In other words, according to *Dark Deleuze*, what kind of agency can truly be said to be revolutionary? Culp identifies two possible responses to these questions. Either revolutionary subjectivity is understood as the process of becoming or undergoing transformation in a way that affects the world in order to dispel ready-made ideas, or subjectivity is located in assemblages and their dynamism of material nature. And Culp's answer clearly falls in line with the former. The agent who carries out this world destruction is a collective agent of un-becoming as opposed to that of assemblages. Becoming, says Culp, is really a process of un-becoming; it is a process of delinking or divesting ourselves from this world. Thus the 'subject' of world destruction is the one who, by undoing what the world has done to it, gains in revolutionary potential to the degree that it avoids 'founding a new order on a new image of world' (Culp 2016: 30). This un-becoming subjectivity, says Culp, is closer to the German anarchocommunist punk scene and bands like Ton Steine Scherben rather than any supposed liberal-democratic, state socialist, or connectivist tradition.

By contrast, and with respect to the subject of un-becoming, Culp views Deleuzians such as Manuel DeLanda and Bruno Latour as individuals who promote a concept of the subject in terms of assemblages. Culp's claim here is that, when studied under the light of a capitalism that is always-already rhizomatic and networked, 'assemblage-modeling is a perfect fit in a world where capitalism produces subjectivity 'the same way it produces Prell shampoo or Ford cars' (Culp 2016: 27). Conferring subjective agency to assemblages amounts to translating Deleuze and Guattari's diagrams of the present configuration of social forces into a true modeling of the real. Henceforth the agents of qualitative transformations are solely defined by what individuals and assemblages can effectuate within the confines of capital. By conferring agency to matter-as-assemblages the difference that 'makes a difference' only exists in the realm of the actual that terminates in a brute form of materialism. These readers of Deleuze merely embarrass themselves at the altar of scientism.

So if revolutionary subjectivity should be conceived as un-becoming as opposed to assemblages what specifically pertains to this 'un-becoming' that gives Culp reason to posit its transformative potential? That is to ask, how does the subject of un-becoming organize the task of world destruction? Culp's reply: by means of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'diagrammatics'; the

process whereby thought doesn't simply map out the structure of reality from what is given to us but the process of extracting and relating singular and ordinary points of an assemblage in order to know which thresholds can be pushed in a revolutionary direction. And if it is a question of diagrammatics, *Dark Deleuze* aligns itself with a kind of diagrammatics Culp terms 'asymmetrical' as opposed to 'complex'. Opting for diagrams of complexity, which involves a notion of difference understood as an inclusive disjunct says Culp, is nothing but the simple reflection of the world as it is in thought. In a sense, on Culp's reading, the terms of 'complexity', 'inclusive disjunction', and 'realism', cannot even be positions that one would either critique or defend since they are already the determining features of capitalist reality. In other words, we gain nothing from defending a position that asserts the 'complexity of reality' since, for Culp; this is nothing more than a banal repetition of logical identity masquerading as novel theoretical insight.

It is for these reasons that *Dark Deleuze* proposes a diagram of asymmetry alloyed to its correlate notion of difference understood as an exclusive disjunct. The diagram of asymmetry aids the subject of un-becoming to persevere in their task of undoing what the world has done to them, and of washing its hands of this world. Here difference is recast in terms of exclusion since to undergo these 'un-becomings' is to undergo a process that establishes one's position as hostile to the present state of things. Additionally, this exclusive notion of difference, says Culp, was the kind of difference privileged by the late Deleuze, the Deleuze who saw control societies as the latest form of capitalist development. Difference as inclusive disjunction, whether considered in Hardt & Negri's concept of Empire or through the progressive substitution of class war with class collaboration, is a notion of difference that has proved time and again to be commensurable with the logic of capitalist development and reproduction. Hence *Dark Deleuze* finds exclusive difference and its subjective correlate of 'become contrary!' as a weapon against the inclusive logic of Empire. At this point, one might claim that exclusive difference and asymmetrical diagrams simply reveal the voluntaristic lie of the supposedly collective, anonymous, and revolutionary 'darkened' Deleuze. That is, exclusion and asymmetry are simply moments of subjective decision and are by no means statements of something objectively real/feasible. It would be as if one could simply pick and choose which diagram and what kind of difference one prefers. The logical terminus of this view is quick to reveal itself: *Dark Deleuze* would, then, appear as one more bottle of Prell shampoo, one more object that is easily commodified and capitalized. It is this kind of critique, however, that decidedly misses the point (and to the readers detriment). Diagrammatics is not a question of true as opposed to false representations of reality despite the fact that Deleuze appears to affirm the basic structure of reality as asymmetrical and hence apocalyptic. Why? Because diagrammatics is a question of devising a map of the world that allows one to have a substantial effect within it. As Culp writes, 'Asymmetry is ultimately a question of combat, even if it is formally established diagrammatically. Its best realization was the twentieth-century guerilla' (Culp 2016: 35). For Culp, the world has always been incommensurate with itself and especially with human interests. Additionally, it is clear that the world will do something with us so it is worth asking what we will do with it? This is diagrammatics, not as ontological argument, but as practical engagement with what is asymmetrical and dynamic in the world itself.

Since diagrammatics is ultimately related to combat, to our un-becomings, the classic problem of how best to organize the struggle necessarily arises. For Culp, it is not rhizomes but unfolding that best captures what is adequate to the task of world destruction. To readers familiar with Deleuze's work, the choice of unfolding, as the privileged form of political organization can appear as strange if not simply a blatant category error that confuses the logic of (substance's) expression with that of (political) representation. However, Culp's usage of the term here could not be more apt precisely because it is the process of unfolding (or *explication*) that proceeds by means of an exclusive disjunct. So, it is with the mode of organizing struggle in accordance with the processes of unfolding/explication that one can develop a possible world that realizes itself in such a way that *either* this explication affords my participation in another world *or* it denies my participation therein. Thus, the exclusivity of difference as exclusive disjunction is the properly destructive tenor of *Dark Deleuze's* 'philosophy of difference,' a weaponized concept of difference that effectuates irreconcilable differences within the world in order to achieve its abolition.

As if writing in order to corroborate Culp's assertion that revolutionary agency today proceeds according to a notion of difference as exclusive disjunction, and the logic of unfolding or explication, Deleuze and Guattari state that "We do not feel ourselves outside of our time but continue to undergo shameful compromises with it."

### 1. Simulacra and the Powers of the False

To complete the picture of the kind of revolutionary subjectivity offered by *Dark Deleuze* it is necessary to say something regarding Culp's use of Deleuze's concept of simulacrum and the powers of falsity (*pseudos*). For Culp, what is effective in the un-becoming of subjectivity is how it brings together its asymmetrical approach to the world and its capacity to render suspect what is obvious and ready-made in the world. Against the idea that Deleuze eventually gave up on the notion of the simulacrum since the term appears with less and less frequency after *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, Culp views the essential traits of this term as a unifying theme throughout Deleuze's life; and one that makes possible this 'darker' interpretation. For example, Deleuze's writings on cinema and its development of this idea of its powers of falsity can be seen as a continuation of the theme of simulacrum under a different name. Both simulacrum and *pseudos* share the positive capacity to affect the world through a questioning of any presumed formal model of truth (i.e. Dogmatic Image of Thought).

Deleuze's affinity to powers of falsity is, perhaps, best seen when he speaks of Godard's cinema since it is always in relation to Godard's ability to render suspect any supposed model of truth and the ready-made ideas we have of the world, a characteristic of all of Godard's work that gives Deleuze reason to sing his praises: '...the key thing is the questions Godard asks the images he

presents and a chance of the spectator feeling that the notion of labor isn't innocent, isn't at all obvious—eve, and particularly, from the viewpoint of social criticism' (Deleuze 1990: 40). Or again, as Deleuze says during the same interview: 'Godard brings into question two everyday notions, those of labor and information. He doesn't say we should give *true* information, nor that labor should be *well* paid (those would be the just ideas). He says these notions are very suspect. He writes FALSE beside them' (Deleuze 1990: 41). Thus, Deleuze identifies the virtue of Godard and the virtues of the powers of the false as their shared ability to render ineffectual/useless our habituated forms of judgment, evaluation, and ultimately Thought itself. It is for these reasons that Culp associates the powers of falsity with the notion of simulacrum, since what is at stake in both Godard's cinema is how to proceed in situations where the question is no longer that of distinguishing true from false information but of calling into question *information as such*. The 'negativity' proposed in *Dark Deleuze*, then, is precisely the hostility expressed by falsity and simulacra toward Thought as we have assumed it to be (the Dogmatic Image of Thought) and the world received through various clichés (e.g., Bacon's paintings) and understood through ready-made ideas. Moreover, the hostility exhibited by *pseudos*/simulacra holds implications for our political interventions:

This is the power generated only between the true and the false: what Deleuze calls "the real." The importance of the real is central, as trying to use truth to dispute the false does not work: those who denounce the illegal violence used to found legal orders are quickly dismissed or jailed, and the many climate scientists who harangue the public about the truth of global warming fail to spur policy change. (Culp 2016: 62)

From the vantage point of our present it is no longer sufficient to 'speak truth to power' just as it is no longer sufficient to promote connectivity and the project of world building. And it is due to this insufficiency that the powers of the false and simulacra need to aid us in envisioning a new strategy of winning the long civil war waged by capital against anything that deviates from, or exceeds, capital's desire for a subject that can be absolutely reduced to their productive functions. The powers of the false are the means by which we may disabuse ourselves of long held habits and assumptions that ground our thoughts and actions in the world. It is these powers of falsity, of *pseudos* and simulacra, that allow us to prize open the possibility of questioning, in the present, the very concepts and ideas that serve as the conditions, which seemingly guarantee of a capitalist future world. Thus, and with regard to *Dark Deleuze's* revolutionary agent, what is now required are the corresponding tactics and methods of combat that necessarily arise from this determination of subjectivity-as-un-becoming and whose theoretical framing proceeds by asymmetrical diagrams. And it is precisely in the concluding pages of Culp's text where he proposes the concept of escape as a means of understanding the political importance of the categories of *pseudos*/simulacrum.

#### **IV. The Politics of Escape**

From what we have seen this much is clear: *Dark Deleuze* asserts the primacy of World Destruction, which becomes increasingly necessary due to the insufficient and outmoded Idea of the World as a guide for both thought and politics. This is a text that demands the removal of the World as object of thought and the elimination of any residual investment in the World as project and goal. It seeks to restore Deleuze to his rightful place in the tradition of revolutionary anti-state communism and to show how specific readings of Deleuze that privilege joy over sadness; affirmation over negation; are fated to be preempted by the logical development of contemporary capital thereby neutralizing any supposed critical import. But where does one go from here and especially given *Dark Deleuze's* brief concluding remarks? At the very least we can say that instead of deepening immanent transparency, connectivity, and productivism, Culp encourages his readers to look toward a *politics of escape*, whose correlating concepts and tools are *indiscernibility* and *opacity*, as the means by which *Dark Deleuze's* project can be carried out. Thus, despite the brevity of Culp's conclusion, one still gets a sense of what Culp intends regarding this set of concepts, and as it relates to the overall argument of his text, in a passage such as this:

*Escape* is never more exciting than when it spills out into the streets, where trust in appearances, trust in words, trust in each other, and trust in this world all disintegrate in a mobile zone of indiscernibility (Fontaine, 'Black Bloc'). It is these moments of opacity...and breakdown that darkness most threatens the ties that bind us to this world. (Culp 2016: 70, my emphasis)

From this passage, one question in particular becomes unavoidable: what is it that grounds this *politics of escape*, with its tactics of *indiscernibility* and *opacity*, such that it can exist with enough autonomy from the forces and relations of capitalist production and therefore appear as useful for the task of world destruction? In other words, on what basis can we be justified in aligning our political commitments with Culp's preferred and 'darkened' concepts over and against a more recognizably Deleuzian political lexicon (with its *rhizomes*, *assemblages*, *planes of immanence*, and *joyous affects*)? Despite the brevity of Culp's concluding remarks, one cannot, however, simply conclude that his interpretation of Deleuze retreats in the face of such questions. Against this temptation of foreclosing any future possibility for the project laid out by Culp, we are obliged to underscore the following: Culp's argument in these concluding pages proceeds by way of an *implicit distinction* between an ontological and political articulation of escape, indiscernibility, and opacity. And this implicit distinction (ontological/political) is particularly evident in connection with his reference to Claire Fontaine and her work on the nature and status of 'black bloc' tactics.

The relevance of distinguishing between ontological and political meanings of escape, indiscernibility, and opacity, for Culp's larger argument can be seen in two main ways: first, regarding the question of philosophical/theoretical commitments, Culp asserts that indiscernibility cannot simply be affirmed as an ontological category without lapsing back into all the errors of the

affirmationist readings he previously attacked; without reviving all those positions which imagine Deleuze as the thinker whose sole aim was to busy himself trying to uncover the intrinsic value of the fabled 'night in which all cows are black'; or the thinker *par excellence* whose thought fails to move beyond platitudes such as 'we're all the same because we all share the same fate' or that 'everything, in this day and age, is connected to everything else.' As Deleuze himself remarks,

Clearly, at this point the philosophy of difference must be wary of turning into the discourse of beautiful souls: differences, nothing but differences, in a peaceful coexistence in the Idea of social places and functions ... but the name of Marx is sufficient to save it from this danger' (Deleuze 1992: 207).

For Culp, however, indiscernibility and escape are never guaranteed or simply given to us by Nature, God, or World, but are the concepts we must create out of that which is given in the present historical conjuncture. That is to say, *zones of indiscernibility* and *opacity* are not mere features of reality that can simply be comprehended within any given situation. It is for this reason that this conceptual pair cannot be taken in their ontological inflection. Rather, indiscernibility and opacity are tools devised to combat and ultimately abolish this world. It is for this reason that Culp's reference to Claire Fontaine is significant since it is in her essay, 'This is not the black bloc,' where Fontaine develops the distinction between ontological indiscernibility (the night in which all cows are black) and political indiscernibility (the night in which all demonstrators look alike), which operates in the background of Culp's conclusion. And against this contested background, it is instructive to cite Fontaine's argument at length:

A distinctive feature of one who finds themselves in what we call a black bloc is to demand nothing for themselves or for others, to cut across public space without being subjected to it for once, to disappear in a mass or factory exists and public transportation at rush hour...*In this night where all demonstrators look alike* there is no point in posing Manichean questions. Especially since we know that the distinction between guilty and innocent no longer matters, all that counts is the one between winners and losers. (Fontaine 2013: 21)

A world of difference, then, keeps apart the fabled 'night in which all cows are black' and the night of insurrection 'where all demonstrators look alike'. Regarding the former, we find ourselves *disabled* in the face of pure immediacy. In this situation, there is nothing about the world that allows us to distinguish something from anything else, or a cause from its effect, or a principle from its consequences, and so on. With the latter situation, however, we find ourselves *enabled* in confrontation with capital's imposed daily rhythm and its state apparatuses of capture. For example, while one may ordinarily be subjected to 'random' stops by the police or even the violence that always arrives at political demonstrations, the indiscernibility of the so-called 'Black Bloc' affords this mass of individuals more opportunities for attack and resisting arrest than if they were to assume the transparency model of peaceful protest and orderly conduct

I could tell you that dressing in black meant: we are all comrades, we are all in solidarity, we are all alike, and this equality liberates us from the responsibility of accepting a fault we do not deserve: the fault of being poor in a capitalist country, the fault of being anti-fascist in the fatherland of Nazism, the fault of being libertarian in a repressive country. That it meant: nobody deserves to be punished for these reasons, and since you are attacking us we are forced to protect ourselves from violence when we march in the streets. (Fontaine 2013: 21)

From the two passages above the key insight of Fontaine's bears repeating: *indiscernibility and opacity are the political means to decide on how we want this world to end*. As if to come full circle, and by means of the distinction between an ontological and political articulation of indiscernibility and opacity, we are brought back to the well known lexicon of Deleuzian scholarship (for example, an emphasis on increasing our powers of acting, or finding a solution to the problem-question 'what can a body do?' and so on), which Culp has taken to task: it is precisely the political tools of indiscernibility and opacity that increase a collective's *power of acting* against the forces that seek to repress and exploit it. *Dark Deleuze* finds safety in the anonymity provided by a crowd of black masks and continuously 'asks if our society can handle that, and what it is worth if it can't' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 381). If these practices of anonymity are constituent of a politics of escape it is because to escape doesn't mean to simply run away or indulge in *escapism*. Rather, escape designates the way in which societies are materially susceptible to transformation; or, to put it in a recognizably Deleuzian lexicon, escape is nothing but the lines of flight that define every social formation and how they change. Thus, says Culp, it is by virtue of a politics of escape – the project whereby we collectively decide on how we want the world to end other than the one guaranteed by capital – with its diagrammatics, un-becoming subjectivity, powers of falsity, and by its proceeding under the cover of darkness or the anonymity of a mask, *Dark Deleuze* becomes, once again, part of that nameless and faceless subject who continues to make and remake History.

Jose Rosales

Berlin, Winter 2016

1. Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 108.

2. William Connolly, Nicholas Tampio
3. Manuel Delanda
4. Smicek and Williams
5. Nick Land
6. François Zourabichvili
7. Daniel W. Smith
8. Tiqqun, The Invisible Committee, Nicholas Thoburn
9. for endorsing the usual abstractions of the Law and the State that hide the workings of power; for denouncing Marxism "not so much because real struggles would have made new enemies, new problems and new means arise, but because THE revolution must be declared impossible"; and for reviving the subject as part of a general martyrology...between liberalism and revolution is intolerance...is where the Dark Deleuze parts ways with the joyful by inviting the death of this world' (Culp 2016: 160).
10. What this book should therefore have made apparent is the advance of a coherence which is no more our own, that of mankind, than that of God and the world. In this sense, it should have been an apocalyptic book' (Deleuze 1992: xxi).
11. As Marx writes: 'The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form. Our investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity.' Karl Marx, *Capital* vol. I, tr. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 126.
12. Think of an old German rock song, "Macht Kaputt, Was Euch Kaputt Macht" by Ton Steine Scherben, an anarchocommunist band connected to the squatter scene and the Red Army Faction (before it went underground). As cheap as it sounds, perhaps the cure for depressive disinterest is the thrill of "destroying what destroys you." (Culp 2016: 50).
13. "The I and the Self, by contrast, are immediately characterized by functions of development or explication: not only do they experience qualities in general...but they tend to explicate or develop the world expressed by the other, either in order to participate in it or to deny it" (Difference and Repetition, 260).
14. *What is Philosophy?* p. 108.

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